

Hot Jobs for the 21st Century

Between 2004 and 2014, U.S. employment will rise to 164.5 million from 145.6. This represents an increase of 13 percent, or 18.9 million jobs. Many of these new job opportunities will benefit persons seeking employment in computer, health, environmental and teaching related occupations.

Women's Labor Force

Women have a huge stake in the current and future job market. Between 2004 and 2014, women's participation in the labor force is expected to increase by about 11 percent, while men will only see an increase of about 9 percent. As a result, women will increase their share of the labor force from about 46 to 47 percent. Labor force participation rates for women, by race, are: black, 61.6 percent; white, 58.9 percent; Asian, 58.2 percent; and Hispanic, 55.3 percent. The fastest labor force increase will be among Hispanic and Asian women, 41.0 and 35.4 percent, respectively. Black women will increase their participation by 16.9 percent and white women by 8.2 percent.

Growing Occupations

There are two perspectives when viewing growth occupations—1) those with the largest job growth; and 2) those with the fastest growth. Largest job growth refers to the total number of jobs created within an occupation over a specific period of time, while fastest job growth refers to the percentage change in employment within a particular occupation over a specific period of time. One fact to remember—the fast growing occupations account for less than 15 percent of the projected overall growth in employment between 2004 and 2014. The employment size of an occupation during the base year of comparison has much to do with the growth of the occupation.

Major Occupational Groups

The largest employment gains between 2004 and 2014 are projected to take place within professional and related occupations (6.0 million jobs) and service occupations (5.3 million jobs). These two occupational groups are also projected to grow the fastest. The fastest-growing major occupational group—professional and related occupations—is made up mostly of occupations that generally require postsecondary education or training. Examples of these are physician assistants, network systems & data communication analysts, computer software engineers, database administrators, physical therapists, preschool and postsecondary teachers, and environmental engineers.

Employment in service occupations is projected to increase by 19 percent or 5.3 million jobs. More than 40 percent of these newly created jobs will be found in education, state & local government, hospitals and health services. Other services sector jobs with substantial projected growth are food services, retail trade and administrative & support services. The number of self-employed service workers is also expected to increase by 154,000 jobs.

The number of executive, administrative, and managerial (EXAM) workers is projected to increase by 14.4 percent, or 2.1 million jobs. Most of these jobs will be found in various segments of the services sector—professional, scientific & technical, finance & insurance, administrative & support, health care, retail trade, state & local government and education. The number of total self-employed EXAM workers is expected to decrease by 35,000 with all losses coming from those with primary jobs in this field. Those with secondary jobs somewhat offsets losses with an increase of 40,000.

Source: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor

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Computer and health-related occupations dominate the list of fast-growing occupations. These two occupational groups also represent some of the higher-paying, faster-growing occupations.

Computer-related occupations (network systems & data communications analysts, software engineers, network & systems administrators, database administrators and systems analysts) will grow at a very fast rate in the coming years because of the continuing advances in computer technology. The expanding need for new computer applications for the World Wide Web, scientific research, productivity gains, and demand for cost reductions will fuel the need for software engineers/programmers, systems analysts, and network & database administrators. The computer field tends to require more education and offer higher earnings than health services, where a number of the fast-growing occupations have lower than median earnings.

Health care occupations will continue to grow rapidly because of a large aging population that will require more health care, a wealthier population that can afford better health care, and the advent of new advances in medical technology. Many of these occupations are technicians and assistants, such as medical & physical therapist assistants, veterinary technologists & technicians, dental hygienists & assistants and home health aides.

Occupations with the largest Job Growth

Most occupations with the largest projected job growth nationally are concentrated in four industry sectors—health services, administrative & support services, state & local government and professional, scientific & technical services. They will account for more than one-half of total job growth from 2004-2014.

Many occupations have average or less than average growth rates while still providing more job openings than some fast growing occupations strictly because of their large size. Some examples of these occupations are retail salespersons, waiters & waitresses, general office clerks, laborers & material movers and child care workers.

Educational Requirement

Occupations requiring an associate degree or higher level of education accounted for nearly one-fourth of all jobs in 2004 and will account for 18 percent of total job growth between 2004 and 2014. Those requiring no education and training beyond high school, including on-the-job training, will account for 78 percent.

Occupations requiring a bachelor's degree or more education are concentrated in the professional and related occupations group. The 2005 median weekly earnings figure for full-time wage and salary workers employed in professional and related occupations was \$900 (both sexes). Examples of fast-growing, high-paying jobs in this category include: computer engineers, systems analysts, network administrators, physician assistants, residential counselors, social workers, biological scientists, and occupational therapists. Examples of large growth occupations in this category are network administrators, computer engineers, post-secondary teachers, social workers and computer analysts.

Examples of high-wage, high-growth occupations that may not require a bachelor's degree but do require post-secondary education or training are: healthcare technologists & technicians, desktop publishers, sound engineering technicians, drafters, healthcare practitioners & technical workers, occupational health & safety technicians, commercial pilots, drafters, appraisers & assessors of real estate and massage therapists.

Growth occupations that do not require post-secondary education generally do not offer the higher than median earnings associated with the above-mentioned jobs. Many of these jobs require short-term on-the-job training in which the worker can usually learn their skills in less than a year. They include: retail salespersons, customer service representatives, janitors and cleaners, waiters and waitresses, home health aides, nursing aides & orderlies, office clerks, laborers & material movers, receptionists, groundskeepers, medical assistants, child care workers, food preparation workers and maids & housekeeping cleaners. None of these occupations had median weekly earnings higher than the average (\$651) for all workers in 2005.